

Wealth In The Fields Of The Poor

Today I recently received an appeal from a missionary working in a poor country who wanted me to consider sending a donation to support national pastors. The missionary stated, "This country is economically devastated. The churches do not yet have the finances to support their pastor full-time... we need to channel financial gifts to them each month." I can relate to this, because I too have sent out appeal letters for my African friends and ministers living in poverty. For many years I helped train ministers and plant churches in the midst of absolute poverty and can tell you the needs are real.

However, even if every one of us sends a donation it does not solve the problem of their living in a continual state of poverty. I assure you that unless we look for a lasting solution we are in most cases creating dependency. To be honest, this perpetual donor-mentality, even though it is well intentioned, creates more problems than it solves.

Here is what would be a more meaningful way for us to get involved - to somehow help them and their congregations to increase their own incomes and be able to support themselves. That would be far better than them having to depend on us to send them money every month. The answer is to help them help themselves...to empower them to change their circumstance...to give them a hand-up instead of a hand-out. I believe the answer is very simply microfinance, which provides small business loans to help them start or expand their own small businesses. With some working capital they can create streams of income to support themselves, their families, and their churches.

There is a verse in Proverbs that say, "There is much food in the fallow ground of the poor." Let's help our poor brethren break up that fallow ground and reap the wealth that is right there in their own fields. It is time for the American church to embrace an empowerment mentality that creates lasting change and no longer enslaves the poor in other nations to our hand-outs.